赤

ホラーアンソロジー 1

Novel

綾里けいし／[illegible]

Illustration

しらび／[illegible]

[illegible]

Horror Anthology - Volume 01 Chapter 01

Table of Contents

1. Novel Illustrations
2. The Child of Cat’s Paw – Nekono Tenoko

Novel Illustrations

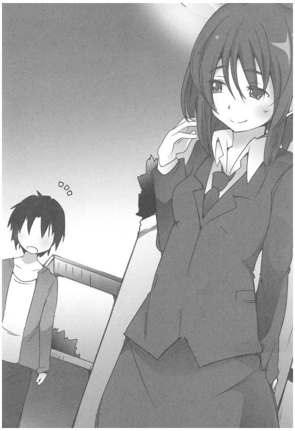
ホラーアンソロジー1
赤
Novel
綾里けいし／舞阪 洸／榊 一郎／田尾典丈／西野吾郎／竹岡葉月
Illustration
しらび／かる／飯田のぎ／カラクリシオン／lxy／みやびあきの
ファミ通文庫

ホラーアンソロジー1
赤
「猫ノ手ノ子」
Illustration かる

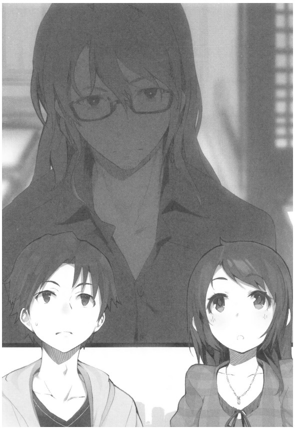
『肝試しの夜に、二人は』
Illustration　飯田のぎ

『ヴァーティカル ～頭上の悪魔～』
Illustration　カラクリシオン

『こびとのげえむや』
Illustration　Ixy



パシャ
へなっ



The Child of Cat’s Paw – Nekono Tenoko

赤
ホラーアンソロジー1
『猫ノ手ノ子』
Illustration かる

The Child of Cat’s Paw – Nekono Tenoko

Written By: *Ayasato Keishi*
Illustrated by: *Karu*

Part-1
Part-2
Part-3
Part-4
Part-5

The feel of soft flesh was felt by my foot.

As I stepped into my shoes, the sole of my foot came into contact with something soft. Cold sweat drenched the sides of my uniform as warm liquid seeped into my sock. I stood in front of the year one's shoe lockers blankly. I was not even able to take off my shoe. Then suddenly the sounds of merry laughter hit my eardrums as a few girls ran out while clapping away with their hands. I waited for them to leave, and then I reached out for my shoe with my trembling hands, and placed my fingers into the gap between my foot and the shoe to pull my shoe off.

The pieces of flesh on my sole were already unrecognizable as tendrils of blood came off from the mashed corpse.

I somewhat managed to imagine the corpse's original shape. If I wasn't wrong, then it should have been a young mouse which hadn't even grown its fur.

I lifted the shoe with one hand and walked towards the water taps beside the sports field. I turned the tap slightly, while using the water to wash away the flesh in my shoes. I then flung my shoes in order to remove the excess water, placed my foot into it again and walked off. I turned back to check if there was anyone at the school gate, but there were only wet shoe prints that were visible on the sports field within my view.

The trail of footprints of but only one foot, just like the ones left by a strange monster.

Takara no Hara Junior High School

Before I left for home, I glanced at the name that hung on the school gate.

It's been a week since I had moved to this town due to my dad's job. But I am still not used to this place. So trying not to be noticed by anyone, I strolled on the road which leads to the old house district with my head lowered down. In this inaccessible small village town, the atmosphere felt odd. It was like it was giving away an unpleasant feeling which constantly plagued the residents here.

Although it was peaceful walking home alone, I was still feeling a little lonely. Moreover I had to endure the torture of the summer sun's heat, which made me extra moody. After ensuring there weren't any students buying tidbits at the wooden house shop in front of the turning point of road, I make my way towards there.

The canary ~that forgot his song, shall I~ abandon him in the mountains?[1]

At this moment, a melody came out of nowhere. It was pulling an intriguing drawl and was emitting a loud & clear voice.

I looked around, but there was no one in sight. So, I followed the melody and urged myself to search for it. I gulped in fear as I noticed the voice coming from between the gap of tidbit shop and the neighboring block. In the dark alleyway, there squatted a person. There was someone crawling in the cramped area between the walls.

That person seemed to be a kid younger than me. Her small curling body was covered in Red clothes and in her small right hand she was grabbing something as she stubbornly dragged it across the floor surface. I couldn't help but gasp.

Scribbles of chalk filled up the spaces around that kid.

And that kid had no hands. There were mingling lines all over the ground as it led to a cat with its head smashed.

Oh No~ Oh No~ that's just too cruel~~~~[1]

That kid then placed the nib of the chalk on the floor and the tip cracked into pieces as the lines that the child drew began to branch. Suddenly, that kid raised its head and black long silky hair waved in mid-air as her, red lips twitched and its huge eyes blinked.

——It was a girl.

The girl had clear features that made her seem artificial. Her face looked proper but every other part was abnormally distorted. Somehow, this made me associate her to an enormous carnivorous flower that I had seen once in the Atlas.

She was wearing an old-fashioned one piece similar to the ones which ancient dolls wore. She stretched her red lips and gave a grin. She was about to speak when my shoulders were suddenly grabbed before I could hear her voice.

“No, no, no, don’t look. You don’t you know what you are looking at. Stop watching.”

The tidbit shop aunty pulled me away from the gap as she pointed at her head while spinning her fingers. I immediately understood what she was trying to say.

——That kid is crazy, don’t go near her.

Being so cold to someone, is this really acceptable? Aunty was still in a blank state as she looked at me and frowned. She then asked me in riddles.

“I have never seen you before…..are you the daughter of Kanzaki family? The family who had just moved over.”

“Yes! I-I am Tomoka Kanzaki. Please, do guide me along!”

I lowered my head in fluster. So as to not be disliked by her, I tried to give her a bow. But Aunty understood as her face full of flab, wrinkled into a smile.

“I see, no wonder you didn’t know anything about it. But make sure you don’t talk to that child next time, do you understand?”

She asked me with a smile. I was unsure as to how to reply.

As auntie’s lips began twitching impatiently, I noticed I was being informal. I was wrong, so I should apologize.

“I-I am very sorry. Thank you for informing me.”

“Ah, it is nothing. I was the one who startled you. Sorry about that.”

As if I was a small puppy, Aunty waved to me as I bit my lips. Again. I was unable to reply to others, unable to thank people when I am supposed to and unable to smile when I should.

Even in my previous school, I wasn't able to get along with anyone. I was always laughed at by my classmates because I couldn't get along well with anyone. So, whenever I think of the similar situation in my new school, I felt that the problem was definitely with me.

Hoping that it would ease my mistakes, I bowed a few more times. But she just held that smile. So, I breathed deeply and began moving my heavy feet in order to leave the shop.

It was indeed my fault. But still, I wanted a more quiet life.

It is fine even if I got hated, I don't need anything more as long as I am able to live my life smoothly.

But even these wishes are now impossible to be fulfilled because I broke the town's rule.

* * *

There are a few strange 'rules' in this town.

First, no one is allowed to bury a corpse underground.

Second, no one is allowed to make doodles on the road with chalk.

Third, it is compulsory for everyone to participate in the cleaning of the shrine.

There should be more 'rules', but I couldn't recall a lot of the details. I had already broken the first and second rule. Or more like I didn't break it but just came into contact with it.

I was like an injured person who had accidentally touched a fierce dog whose wound just continued to fester and wouldn't heal no matter what.

That day, the hamster raised in our class had died.

The death was caused by over eating because the class had fed it too much.

By that time, the enlarged hamster had turned into a ball of fur and had caved into the nest. The girls cried, pitying the dead hamster and I stood at a loss among all the crying. While the others were grieving, I first thought ‘why didn’t they control the amount of food given to the hamster’.

But I wasn’t able to say it out because everyone was wallowing in despair and that only meant that I was definitely the odd one.

Everyone in my class was suspicious of me, but that didn’t matter. I didn’t feel sad, nor did I cry.

I immediately lowered my head the moment our class monitor grabbed the cage and resolutely walked out of the class. At Takara no Hara Junior High School there were few students. So everyone had strong bonds with someone. Therefore all the girls in the class pursed their lips and followed behind her. I looked around and followed them at once.

There was quite a crowd at the corridor during the lunch break. However everyone made way for the class monitor as they saw her with a serious expression on her face. With an odd tension in the atmosphere, we went down the staircase and towards the incinerator at the back of the school building. It was slightly open, emitting ash and the odor of rubbish.

The class monitor threw everything that was in the cage into the incinerator including the corpse of the hamster which was shaken off cruelly. Seeing all this, I raised my hand and asked in a shaky voice.

“Err… don’t we bury it?”

Treating the hamster as garbage, isn’t that a little too cold?

“What did you just say, Kanzaki-san?

The class monitor spoke in a cold tone. The solemnness in her voice made me gasp.

Did I say something so strange? I looked around, but all I received were the gazes from faces full of disgust. With their eyes wide open, my eyeballs squirmed with anxiety as they all stared at me.

“What did she just say?”

“Will it attract the shadows?”

“How can that be possible?”

“Maybe she is same as Chihiro.”

“Oni? The Child of Oni?”

“Bury the corpse?”

“It will overflow from the other side.”

“Doesn’t she know?”

“Ah”

Everyone started muttering.

The class monitor adjusted her spectacles and placed her hands behind her back as she stood straight.

“I see that no one told you then I suppose, Kanzaki-san? The reality is, no one is allowed to bury a corpse underground, whether it be a pet or human. It must be burnt. It is a rule set a long time ago.”

“But, why can’t we bury it? Will something happen if we do?”

“Kanzaki-san, do you have a problem comprehending? I did say that it is a rule right? Please don’t question any further.”

It seemed that I had disappointed her as she glared at me while the other girls sighed. Brutally closing the incinerator’s door, the class monitor left with the empty cage. She didn’t even turn back to look at the incinerator.

Just like that, the hamster was gone from our class.

That very afternoon of the same day, I was introduced to the second rule.

Kong, Kong, Kong.

The drawers of the tables bumped as our teacher pulled the drawer out and placed it on the table. His expression was as furious as that of a (probably the vengeful kind) ghost. Under those spectacles, his eyes were filled with rage and frustration. He emptied the drawer and showed us it’s interior.

“The chalks are gone, who took them?”

An illusion of turbulence swept through the classroom. So, I couldn’t help but feel suffocated.

The management of the chalks in the class were abnormal. Normally it would be kept in a drawer with a pad lock on it. Even the number of chalk was recorded carefully. As for the missing chalks, they could have been taken by some other teacher who had forgotten to lock the drawer. However, the teacher never spoke of it but instead kept bugging us about it.

“Who was it? Anyone who took the chalk, raise your hand now.”

I won’t scold you——that’s the type of sentence that our teacher would never say.

My classmates began whispering to each other. Their voices were very soft. Like the wings of a fluttering insect, but they entered my ears regardless.

“Who took it?”

“What should we do, the rule is…”

“Because of the chalk Taichi was…”

“It is not, you moron…”

“But, Chihiro is…”

“There might be other people who may touch it…”

“Kanzaki-san….”

“Kanzaki-san was the one who did it?”

That last sentence entered my ears clearly. And then, everyone turned their head towards me like a spring.

Then, our class monitor smiled. She affectionately looked at me and said,

“Kanzaki-san, do you happen to have the chalks? You didn’t know about it right?”

“…………Eh?”

“It is okay to speak the truth. If you don’t know it, then it can’t be helped.”

She spoke with a cordial tone. But I couldn’t see any motif behind her speech.

However I wasn’t able to reply as the atmosphere at that time didn’t allow me to. She didn’t want any other answers aside from my confirmation. I looked around and tried to ask for help using my eyes. However, everyone nodded contentedly with a relieved expression on their faces.

“Kanzaki right?” “It must be Kanzaki-san” “After all she is the transfer student.” “Since she doesn’t know it” “Then it can’t be helped.”

There were Goosebumps all over my skin. The class monitor tried to smooth things over with a proud look, but I really didn’t know where the chalk went. My only hope was for the teacher to disapprove this.

He pushed his black-framed spectacles up and slanted his head slightly.

“Kanzaki, was it you? Did you take the chalk without knowing the situation? …… Kanzaki, there is a ‘rule’ in this town where we are not allowed to draw on the road using the chalk, especially circles and lines. You can’t go against that rule. So the management of chalk is very strict……So you stole it? Ah?”

“I don’t know! I don’t even need, let alone want a chalk!”

——Tsk.

There were sharp glares behind my back as I screamed. I didn’t have the courage to turn back, but at least I was able to peek at the expressions all around me. Among all the faces of dissatisfaction, I spotted a girl who was an exception. She seemed scared as she bit her nails nervously. What was that girls name again?

“Yagi san, it is Yagi san right? You wouldn’t not know anything about this, right?”

“—— Eh?”

“Yagi-san you are scared right? Why are you scared?”

Yagi stared at me with her eyes wide open. I then remembered. When the hamster had died, she was the one who cried the loudest. Because of that, several girls patted her shoulders and tried to comfort her.

“Yagi, are you aware of something?”

Yagi lowered her head as the teacher asked her in a rough voice. She was trembling uncontrollably to the point that even the table began to vibrate. The class monitor kicked her chair away and stood up but before she could say anything, Yagi-san opened her mouth.

“Chi-Chihiro, because she!”

Yagi’s trembling hands reached into her bag and the next moment, a bundle of chalk held by a rubber band appeared in her hands. Yagi-san then smacked her dirty hands on the table.

The broken chalk dropped onto the floor. Then, she screamed as big drops of tears trickled down.

“Because Chihiro told me to, she told me to hand it over to her, she made me give her the chalk! I…I…!!!”

She then laid her face on the table and then, vague sounds of crying echoed in the classroom.

The teacher scratched his head looking troubled as he shook his head looking somewhat bothered and said:

“Ah, I see its Chihiro. I am also troubled by it. But still, it is wrong to steal things, Yagi. Come to the office later, do you hear me? The lesson for today stops here. Continue with your cleaning duty as usual.”

Stand, bow, greet.

The speech ended abruptly. In the great noise made in the background, the teacher took the tear-ridden Yagi-san and left the classroom. Silence fell upon the class the moment he closed the door. Then, countless gazes pierced my back. It felt as if my skin was going to be pierced through and blood could trickle out at any moment.

Suddenly, there were sounds of heavy footsteps as the monitor walked in an unnatural manner and stood in front of me. As the class representative, she declared to me.

“What have you done?”

At that moment, I knew my treatment in class was fixed.

*   *   *

“But, I have no choice. I didn’t steal it.”

I faced the wall trying to protest. Of course my voice is not passed to anyone.

Moreover, the problem wasn’t on whether I stole the chalk or not, is that I defied the whole groups’ opinion and harmed one of them. It was just like stabbing a knife into the tail of an enormous creature.

I sigh deeply as I opened the window the let the blood scent to disperse.

I hid the socks into the dustbin. Once mother knew what happened, the situation would definitely worsen. Mother who had a rough character would go straight to classmates’ houses to fight for fairness.

Neither do I want to open the textbook which had been scribbled into a mess. I caressed over my finger tip bruised with a cut and shook my head. It was caused by the blade mount on the table, it may leave a scar.

I can still feel the pain.

“Tomoka? Are you free?”

Mother called me from downstairs. I stood up and changed over a new pair of socks slowly, and then I walked down to the lounge. Mother raised her face; her eyes which had been carefully drawn with eyeliner looked at me with confusion.

“Sorry Tomoka, can you help me to run an errand? I want to buy Botamochi. Come look at this.

Mother sighed and passed the flyer over to me. Notification of shrine cleaning was printed on it, including the warning that attendance was compulsory. I flipped open the second page and was shocked by its content.

‘One is to prepare own tribute. The species of flower must be exquisite. After putting on the flower, replenish water for three days. Possibly prepare self-made Japanese pastry, the methods are as below……’

Words as tiny as ants filled the whole paper.

“Compulsory attendance for shrine cleaning was mentioned before, but……isn’t this a little too over. Hey, Tomoka. I feel strange…… about this town.”

Mother murmured in fear, I nodded in silence. This town is restricted by incomprehensible rules. Just like a trap to probe us, similar to an entangling spider web.

“Then……I leave to buy the Botamochi.”

I swallowed the ominous feelings, and showed mother a smile.

Taking over the money and I went out. The sun was still as warm. I pray to not meet any of my classmates as I walked forward. The sense of summer is getting stronger as each day passed.

Under the scorching sun, I dashed.

* * *

After I bought the Botamochi, I went back home. I held the bag single-handed and looked up to the sky. Evening came in unannounced. The blue sky starts to be dyed by the color of a ripe fruit. Hence I am not worried of meeting any of my classmates.

In this town, no kids come out during evening.

Going outside at night is forbidden. The moment the evening hits, children would just go back to their houses.

Why would they just go back so obediently? This seemed to be of the lore.

Kamikashi, is a huge man who catches people with a briefcase in his hand. Even me who was excluded had overheard a few stories. I was just like the fat cat in front of me, enduring the town’s cold ghastly stories.

One of these rumors was heard by me accidentally.

I wasn’t sure if that was considered a lore or not, but it seemed to be creepy.

——Chiharu, what it was?

Just as I spaced out, a warm but imposing wind blew between my thighs. A sour yet sweet scent filled my nose. This smell was like of a new born baby’s.

At the same time, I felt some sort of breath came behind my back.

——There is something behind me.

That creature made me felt an enormous heat, scorching my back.

The peculiar scent became even concentrated. There was a numb touch on my neck. Sticky sweat trickled down my skin. I gulped, trying to move my sight slowly. A thick smear of orange was reflected in my eyes. The setting sun burned my retina.

Down there, stood a teenage girl. I once saw her tilting her head while crossing her fingers.

Her thick black hair cut off at the waist. The dress like of an old doll's as seen before. She had a beautiful appearance but her smile was indescribably appalling.

“Hey, what are you doing?”

Her brutal teeth were revealed. The dirty colored teeth were similar to an animal's, and were engaged in a stiff manner.

She stretched her words as she approached me. After that, the wind that was like before blew again. The girl's dress lifted. Her slender legs exposed in the air. At this very moment, I can't help but to gasp. On her stuck-out knees, bruises and wound covered all over, the mottled skin made it to be associated to an amphibian's skin.

An unspeakable horror crawled up my chest.

This girl is so, creepy.

“Hey, let's play, let's play. Please?”

She stretched out her right hand, her pale and long fingers clutched my shirt.

Her hand was especially large for her age. For some reasons, her hands seemed to develop better than her body.

“Let's play. Hey, hey, can we play together?”

“…E, em, maybe next time.”

I turned over hastily, the girls' fingers slipped off from my clothes. She showed a disgusted expression but soon broke into a smile. She got dejected upon looking at me, all frightened.

“Okay, next time then.”

She replied merrily. She grinned, a grin that I had never see in her.

The muscles of this girl seemed to be present for smiling. She softened her face and created a shape of a smile. This change made her looked freakish, however the smile was so brightening that one couldn’t speak.

“See you ——!!”

The girl bounces and waved at me as if she was dancing. Her looks made me associated her with a noisy puppy. I can’t help but to feel light-heated, and waved back to her. She then wave back even harder. Sinking heart of mine suddenly became lively again.

I left as the crow hoot. The similar warm hot wind caressed my cheeks.

The milkfish stink was gone. I immediately turned around.

There wasn’t anyone over there, leaving only the shadow of the utility pole casting lonely on the road. I gazed around the empty road, and start to leave. I then realized.

When we first met, she was doodling with a chalk.

While just now, she was standing under the evening twilight.

That action had just obliged the rules of this town.

Or, she was the only one that isn’t bounded by the rules.

* * *

“Kan—zaki—!”The loud shouting made me raised my head. The beam of light of the bright sun reflected into my eyes. At the same moment, a shiny transparent object dropped and smashed on me. It broke with a great sound.

I was totally drenched. I heard the burst of laughter of the crowd as the window above my head was shut. The lessons on Saturday ended before noon. But obviously they stayed back in school just to pour water over me. Bullying me had seemed to be one of their entertainments.

I spat out the water, rubbed my nose as I wrung out the water from my skirt. They attacked in a sudden manner but were better than a straight violence. They surrounded me from far, threw stones at me to find amusement. It is self deceiving to say it wasn’t hurting but I could only tolerate. Things don’t worsen when I tolerate over this period of time.

I prayed to god, and could only believe so.

I dragged my drenched body, and walked ahead. However, I felt uneasy. A soft giggle came behind me. All of them should still be on the second level. An ominous feeling was flowing through my entire body. Human is a species that tend to be used to excitement. If they had enough of bullying methods which only beat about the bush, then the scenario will be uncontrollable.

* * *

The scene of a cicada with its head cut off appeared in my mind, I started to run subconsciously.

Craaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaack.

My feet trampled over something. It was an empty bucket. It was still wet inside. My blood froze and I sped up and dashed off.

“Ah, she escaped.”

”Damn, she got away.”

”She noticed it?”

”It seems she did.”
There were both guys and girls in those voices. Apparently, they knew what they were doing.
I dashed out the school gate. However, the footsteps caught up behind me.

There was more than one person after me. Sadly I don’t have the extra energy to check the exact number. But I can imagine how terrible it would be if I was caught. Forcing my face into the toilet bowl, kicking my stomach until I vomit; I can’t stand it anymore. I just hoped for a peaceful life, but why did things turned out like this. Was it really my fault? Am I to be blamed that’s why I am left out? If that was the case, what should I do then?

What should I do so that I would not be hated? I thought of many answers, but there wasn’t a right one.

“Hah,hah,hah”

I can hear myself panting. Sweat had drenched my whole body, the accelerating heartbeat hit against my chest fiercely. I felt that my legs would snap from my ankle if I stop now. Tears mixed with mucus trickled down my chin.
Nasty words came from my back. I prayed I could dump them after I made a turn at the next corner.

I couldn’t help but to stop upon reaching that corner.

The ground was full of scribbles.

Countless lines crawled on the black, hot concrete ground. The intersecting white lines buried the road as if they were full of hatred. A twisted yet magnified man looked up at me within the scribbles, making him looked like a taboo. Fear and uneasiness filled up my chest as I faced this incomprehensible thing.

My feet were trembling, but I could only choose to move forward so as to escape. I shifted my sight to the ground; the tip of my foot was just beside a thick white line like a boundary line, preventing people from entering. In front of the line, it was a world of abstract scribbles. A sentence suddenly popped into my mind.

Do not cross the line drawn on the road.

I jumped upon hearing the footsteps.

At the same moment, the footsteps arrived at the corner, and screams followed up. The footsteps stopped, silence filled my ears. I stood there blankly. They did not catch up, for some reason. Cold sweat started to seep out from my back.

The cries of a cricket came from the distance. Along with that disturbing noise, I turned around.

A few of my classmates gaped at me, their faces turned pale.

“E,eeeeeee,eeeeeeeee,eeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeek!”

“N,nooooooooooooooooooooo!”

Some laughed distortedly from the back. One of the girls gave a horrible shriek. The fear seemed to be contagious, everyone fled after hearing the shriek. Even after someone had fallen down, they continued running, trampling over one another.

I was the only one left. A milky stench filled my nose. The drenched uniform surface started to dry up. An unpleasant atmosphere surrounded me, I clutched my skirt tightly, alarmed by the situation.
——never look back.

Who~~~is behind~~you now~~[2]

A voice sounded, accompanied with an odd echo. Footsteps approached me, together with the increasingly foul milk smell. It was a mixture of stench and sweetness, reminding me of stinky rotten fish. Suddenly, something touched my hair.

My hair was pulled forcefully, and I was made to turn over. The girl whom I met before stood there. Her hands were dirtied by chalk. She smiled brightly, distorting her beautiful face. Blinking her big round eyes, she let go of my hair, with a naive smile.

“Hey, let’s play, can’t we?

Ghostly pale fingers stroked cheek, and then stroked away hair which had stuck onto my forehead.

She caressed my face, and tilted her head as if she saw something incredible.

“Why is it so wet? Don’t you hate it? Isn’t it cold?”

At that moment when I heard that anxious voice, something within me broke.

My feet lost all its strength and I sat down, feeling paralyzed. Everything that I managed to endure till now became unbearable now. Tears trickled down my cheeks, flowing all over my face. Fear, sorrow, unwillingness, all of them overwhelmed my heart.

Of course it is dreadful. How can it be nothing? It is so depressing.

Why do I have to suffer all this? Did I do something wrong? I would never do that again, so please, at the very least just don’t hate me.

The heat on the road’s surface was scorching my feet. I cried as if I was screaming. The girl looked confused; she squatted down beside me, and asked at a loss.

“Why? Why did you cry? Come on, it’s fine, don’t cry.

She hugged me, burying my face into her chest filled with that foul milk smell. The girl’s clothes were stained with dust and sweat. She gently stroked my head, as if she was comforting a child, or treating her pet dog, full of love and care.

Her whole body was very warm, unreasonably so, except for her right hand.

“Okay, okay, don’t worry, don’t worry.”

She chirped. I closed my eyes. Even though she was gentle and sweet, my instinct were crying the opposite, I must escape, I must wave off her hands.

It was because, she felt like she lacked something she needed as a human.

However, I gave up. Her breasts were soft. I snuggled into her small body. I felt indifference to her slightest bit of abnormality.

She won’t bully me, neither would she chase after me nor scold me.

She would only hug me tightly. So why do I even need to escape.

“Hm, let’s play. Let’s play together.”

She laughed merrily and stood in front of me. She stood up as she hummed with joy.

We walked side by side, I then suddenly realized I still don’t know something very important.

“Erm, what is your name?”

I asked. Bewilderment filled my chest again. She wasn’t aware of my feelings, she turned her head while pulling her hair to the back, and answered cheerfully.

“——Chihiro ! “

*　　*　　*

Her name is Chihiro Fuyusaki.

And so, I made my first friend.

The Chihiro the kids were afraid of, seemed to be the same person as her. Despite her unknown aura, she was just a normal child. Chihiro was the same age as me, however she had a poor growth. Unsure of what hidden reasons she had, she was not attending school. She appeared from all places every day after I ended school.

She would act like a spoiled child, requesting me to carry her. She would hum merrily when I carried her. It felt pleasant, just like I had a younger sister every time I saw her pushing my head roughly.

We would play together in that short evening.

Instead of playing, it is just me watching her scribbling on the road, hopping around in the park. Chihiro seemed to be contented with these, and would come close to me from time to time, requesting me to caress her head.

“Tomoka~Heehee,Um, Tomoka~”

It was contenting to see her smile too.

I am not alone anymore. As long she was around, I would not feel lonely.

And soon after, I was taught of the fourth “rule”

————not to play with the child of oni.

Since the day I was friends with Chihiro, all the presence of bullying vanished.

To Be Updated…

Translators Notes & References

1. ↑Line from Canary sung by Yaso Saijo.
2. ↑. Famous Japanese Rhymes.